

News 'N' Notes

November 2020

Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas

Founded February 5, 1931

Member of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc.

<http://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org>

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President's Address



Members,

And the virus continues in the world! Who thought we would still be dealing with it? In September, the Saline County Branch of PRA met at Tyndall Park. It was extremely nice to get together again. One branch has been using a free conference call service. If your branch has been meeting, I would be interested in knowing your method.

I have attempted to take care of essential PRA business. In June, Board members met by email. In September, we used the free conference call service. Both methods enabled us to conduct the essential business but, at the same time, protect our Board members from the virus.

Poetry Day has come and gone. We weren't able to meet in person; however, I feel that having Sandy Longhorn's video available, we can still learn things that will help in our writing and improve our poetry. I encourage you to continue reading, writing, and encouraging poetry!
Spend Time On Poetry!

Frieda Patton
President

Poetry Day in Arkansas October 31, 2020

Poetry Day was celebrated with a video detailing the history of the first Poetry Day, recognizing PRA members who died within the last year, announcing the winners of the Sybil Nash Abrams and Rose Zagnoni Marinoni contests, and the Merit Award recipient. Thanks to Poetry Day Chair, Laura Bridges, and PRA President, Frieda Patton, for their work on this video. Thanks also for a second video prepared by Sandy Longhorn, the featured Poetry Day speaker.

Check the **Contest Winners** tab and the **Events** tab on the PRA website for the list and videos. <https://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org/>

Check the PRA Facebook page for links to these videos. <https://www.facebook.com/Poets-Roundtable-of-Arkansas-132910063410695/>

Check your email for a complete list of all Poetry Day contest winners and links to these videos.

Congratulations

Monthly Contest Winners

From Renee Ramsey:

August

The summer frolic poems have been judged!

Thanks to Kate Lacy for judging our 7 entries.

First: Barbara Blanks—"I'm Not Budging Until It's Cooler"

Second: Dennis Patton—"A Summer Refresher"

Third: John McPherson—"The Summer of Grandma's Colic Frolic"

1st HM: Cathy Moran—"All for the Good"

2nd HM: Terrie Jacks—"A Sizzling Sing-Along Song"

September

Thanks to Marie Allison for judging our 19 poems.

First: Cona Faye Adams—"Raindrop Bullets Lash"

Second: Ann Carolyn Cates—"In August Garden"

Third: John McPherson—"Autumn's Buffet"

1st HM: Sara Gipson—"Rural Seasonal Murals"

2nd HM: Catherine Parker—"Anatidae"

3rd HM: Marilyn Joyner—"Masks and Gloves Abound"

Congratulations and Newsworthy

***Gail Denham: Member-at-large**

Won 2nd prize with "Remember the Dance" in CCMWG ekphrastic contest; won two second prizes and a third prize in the annual Massachusetts contest; had two poems published in Quill & Parchment; won prizes in Arizona monthly contests; a short essay published in Short & Sweet anthology; had several poems in Pennessence (Pennsylvania).

September 7, 2020

***Bruce Hoffsommer** in Two Rivers Poets had his first poem published and in his hometown publication!

***Terrie Jacks Member-at-large**

In the last newsletter I mentioned working with a fellow poet, who had asked me for help. I am still doing that. It has given me an extra reason to write and it is exciting to explore new forms. I have found I like the triolet. It is a challenge to get something said in the confines of the 8 lines, the repeats and a certain rhyme scheme. Yet, after the first two lines are written, there really are only 3 more lines to create because of the repeated lines in the form, then I had to deal with the rhyme scheme. All in all I have some fun with the form. This month I set myself and my friend a challenge to write poems related to October. Everyone could try that, the month offers so much, color changes, leaves falling, pumpkins,

Halloween, witches, cauldrons, cats, an autumn walk, maybe an Oktoberfest, pumpkin ale, and so much more. Something other than the virus that is keeping us separated from others. Give it a try.

Suzanne Rhodes is teaching a workshop. It's through the Muse Writers Center in Norfolk, Virginia, and is one of the premier centers of its kind in the nation. I taught there for five years when I lived in Virginia Beach, and that was my favorite teaching experience. It was gratifying to see the participants grow in their craft and, for some, to go on and publish poems in journals and even publish their first books! So I was happy for the silver lining of the pandemic that has allowed me to rejoin the faculty.

On the chance that you know some poets who might like to participate, below are a couple of links.

Tuition assistance is available.

<https://the-muse.org/event/the-poetry-workshop-3/2020-10-12/>

<https://the-muse.org/want-be-a-poet-the-muse-gives-you-the-path-to-become-one/>

If you have any questions, please contact

suzannelrhodes@gmail.com

Why poetry? (not a poem) from J. Bruce Hoffsommer

Otherwise, life is a succession of experiences without thought by the best part of the soul. Poetry is more than meditation and sweet thoughts. It is introspection that opens every door of mind and soul and by the craft of words, arranges what is found into a work of art. Genuine poetry is verbalized life.

The poetry by the beginner or amateur is often shallow sweetness and light.

Even so, such a beginning or casual infrequent author needs to continue the craft

until it overtakes him or her and grows into the powerful expressive entity it can become.

Then, at that level of achievement, its essence can and should be expressed in the simplest of terms, carefully chosen words that in their simplicity can touch the deepest reality of anyone who will listen.

So why poetry?

It is because nothing reaches and enriches the most wonderful parts of humanity quite like it.



Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas (PRA) has announced that **Pat Laster** of Benton, Arkansas, has been selected as an Honorary Member. There are five members of PRA named as Honorary Members. The selection of Honorary Member is in recognition of having contributed

significantly to the efforts of PRA. Mrs. Laster received the PRA Merit Award in 1997 and served as president of PRA 1994-1996 and 2003-2005 and in various other positions with the local Saline County Branch of PRA.

After majoring in piano and teaching public school music for 27 years, and Gifted Ed for the last few, the writing bug bit me. I'd written poetry since 1984, but when I enrolled in a graduate class, Writing Across the Curriculum, my life changed.

I've been schooled in "lucid" poetry, under the tutelage of Ted O. Badger, long-time editor and publisher of *The Lucidity Poetry Journal*.

I've also edited two newspaper columns of poetry, *The Benton (AR) Courier* (now the *Saline Courier*) that has a long, continuous history but is now being used primarily as filler, and *The Amity (AR) Southern Standard*, that I began. Since the recent poetry editor died, the editor asked me to take it back. I publish one short poem, preferable from poets in the southwest part of the state, along with my weekly general-interest column.

I retired in 1994 to concentrate on writing. I have been a resident of the Writers Colony at Dairy Hollow in Eureka Springs for a dozen years, and a writer at the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum Education Center writers retreat in Piggott one year longer. My first novel, *A Journey of Choice*, was published in 2010 by iUniverse, and the sequel, *Her Face in the Glass* was published during the fall of 2015 by CreateSpace in both softback and Kindle editions.

In August of 2016, **HIDING MYSELF INTO SAFETY: A Collection of Short Stories and Long poems** was published. It was edited by Sharon Laborde of Cahaba Press of Eureka Springs AR and Birmingham AL in softback and Kindle versions. In August of 2019, **A Compendium of Journal Jottings: A Writer's Sourcebook**, was published by the same press. A book of poetry and a memoir are the next projects.

I asked Pat about her reaction when she heard the news. This is her response:

"I had to sit down when President Patton called to tell me of the honor the executive board bestowed by naming me an honorary member of PRA. I join an august group of poets and am pleased to be among them. Thank you to the board."

Welcome New Members

Suzanne Rhodes, Fayetteville
Edgar Meyer, Little Rock

Poet Profiles

This issue I am featuring two PRA members: Dennis Patton and Dr. Emory D. Jones. If you would like to be featured or if you would like to nominate a PRA member to be featured, email me at

jkmoultons@yahoo.com

Dennis Patton



Where do you find inspiration for your poetry? That question is like asking an artist what he will paint next. It could be a rock, a word, a sound, or the normal occurrences in everyday life. I have awakened at 3:00 in the

morning to write something that won't let me go back to sleep until it is on paper. If I wait to write when I get up at 7:00, alas, the thought is gone.

Can you describe your process? I classify myself as a lazy poet. I do not write every day. I envy those who are so structured to write that often. When inspiration comes, I may write two or three poems at a time. Sometimes, I go days and get scared that I've lost my muse. There must be an inspiration and, since the ideas and words seem to roll out quickly, I love my laptop. On computer, I don't have to mark through a line or erase but can keep going by simply clicking a key. There are places I still carry a spiral notebook--like in my deer stand. I like the steno notebooks which have the line down the middle. I can write on one side and edit on the other. I don't keep journals. **When did you start writing poetry?**

I started writing in high school, but for my own pleasure. There was very little I shared with others at that time. I began to share years later with my wife who has always encouraged me. **Is there a poet or a person who encouraged you to write?** My mother would be the single person I would name as to who encouraged me and not for the obvious reasons. She read poetry to my brothers and me when we were growing up. On seasonal occasions, such as Christmas, Easter, or even Thanksgiving, she would read poems which inspired me. My first poem was written to her when I was in the first grade. The teacher encouraged us to write something to our mothers for Mother's Day. I will never forget the red construction paper with cutout blue butterflies and crayoned heart with the best letters a first-grader could scrawl in crayon, "Butterfly hover near my

mother/ Tell her that I dearly love her.” I was embarrassed to give it to her. She cried. **Who are a few of your favorite poets and/or poems?** I don’t have time or space to name poets or poems I enjoy over and over. In no particular order, I would name Emily, Edgar (both Poe and Guest), Kooser, Keats, Longfellow, some (not much) Shakespeare, and Browning. “Jest Fore Christmas” by Field is one of my favorite poems as well as “The Highwayman” by Alfred Noyes. “The Raven” has lasted with me as well. Maya Angelou’s “Caged Bird” and Gwendolyn Brooks’ poem “We Real Cool” are both favorites. I am a Billy Collins fan because his similes and metaphors leave me with my jaw agape like the hallway of a dilapidated barn. I wish I could write like that.

Dennis has enjoyed poetry from early childhood because his mother read to her children as they grew up in rural Arkansas, near Clarksville. He became a member of Saline County branch of Poets’ Roundtable of Arkansas (PRA) in 2005 after moving from Little Rock to Alexander. He saw a weekly poetry column in the *Saline Courier* which included an invitation to all who enjoyed or wrote poetry. He currently serves as editor of the *Saline Courier’s* “Poets Forum” and president of the branch.

He retired from ABF in 2003. He is an avid fisherman and hunter, which has been a boon to his writing. Along with gun, coffee, and sandwich, he carries pen, pad, and newspaper puzzle to the deer stand. The solitude in nature serves as a rare enticement to his pursuit. Often, he struggles with the difficult choice of hunting or finishing a poem. His love for poetry has led him to recognize life is too short to be without poetry and he shares in hope to inspire others.

What are you most proud of in terms of your poetry? To be recognized by others. It is rewarding and inspiring for someone to say, “good poem.”

“How I Find the Words”

I threw a stone into a dug well
at Grandma’s home place.
Far down to bottom,
to water, and to resounding
gurgles lapping against stone walls,
and I stood spellbound
as echoes vibrated
along walls
back to my ears.

Poetry in sound.
To find a word and continue
my poem, I thought

of that well, how stone splashed,
then gurgled.
I remember how it resonated
from side to side when I leaned
over the opening and said
silly words, high pitched,
or in deepest bass
a boy of ten could.

Then it came to me.

In writing poetry, throw a word
into the poem like a stone
into that well.
There is a moment of waiting,
listening, feeling, sensing,
until it reaches bottom.
As it splashes emotions,
inflection of voice rolls
each word over an eager tongue.
A spiritual sense can listen
for proper echo. A warm sound
caresses heart and soul
imitating voice and well.

It resonates.

It is then I write on,
closing the well,
until I search
for another word.

Dr. Emory D. Jones



Where do you find inspiration for your poetry? I find inspiration from various things, such as nature, everyday life, what I read, and other poets. **Can you describe your process?** I do not write every day. I guess that you could say I am “inspired” to write. I compose

on the computer in my EMORY’S POEMS domain. **When did you start writing poetry?** I wrote my first poem when I was twelve years old, but I really did not start composing poems until I was at Ole Miss. **Is there a poet or a person who encouraged you to write?** My father encouraged me to write. Now, my wife and daughters are my main encouragers. **Who are a few of your favorite poets and/or poems?** I enjoy John Keats, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Frost, and Carl Sandburg.

Dr. Emory D. Jones is a retired English teacher who has taught in high school and in several community colleges. He has four hundred forty-seven credits

including publication in such journals as *Voices International*, *The White Rock Review*, *Writer's Digest*, *Smokey Blue Literary and Arts Magazine*, *The Light Ekphrastic*, *Old Red Kimono*, *American Poetry*, *Deep South Magazine*, *Modern Poetry Quarterly Review*, *Gravel*, and *Encore: Journal of the NFSPS*. He is retired and lives in Iuka, Mississippi.

"SPEAKING OF DAUGHTERS"

He called the other night.
"My wife had a sonogram,
You know, to check out all that stuff
Because she's over thirty-five."

"Yeah, Steve, I know.
And what were the results?"

"It's a girl! I can't believe
I'll have a daughter.
And her little hand
was reaching out."

"She's learning early, son.
I have two and know how it is;
You've got to learn it on your own."

"Yeah, good buddy,
But I know the first thing I need—
A shotgun."

"Yeah, a .410 will do.
And don't forget your Daddy Glare.
You have a .410 shotgun
And a 10-gauge Daddy Glare,
And she'll be all right."

"Well thanks, man.
Gotta go now. Bye."

The phone clicked,
The line went dead,
And I sat
Remembering
Little girls.

Keeping Poetry Alive—Golden Lines

Thank you to the poets who answered my request for Golden Lines.

Gail Denham

"Poetry is like standing under a rainstorm & letting your nose run without caring" (Tonyi Korona, sixth grade.

"Poetry takes you places. It takes you to Japan, the future, the sky, the sun." Enioca Joseph, fifth grade
"Poetry speeds by slowly. It is a calmness on paper." (William Haddon)

"Poetry is a shattered thought reflecting ideas back into the mind." (Shad Springel, high school)

"Poetry is a moving piece of work." (Becca Reisch, middle school)

...The above five quotes are from "A Slow Flash of Light" anthology of Poems about Poetry, compiled by Jack Collom. Much of these poems are by students.

Terrie Jacks

Golden lines appear everywhere. Things like: you only fail if you don't try. Henry Ford and Eleanor Roosevelt both said something similar. Also, I heard a statement on a talk show: *A set back is nothing but a set up for a comeback*. I immediately posted that on my fridge along with two other lines: *I am not afraid of a storm, for I am learning to sail* and *This trouble set me back, yet still I am a bird and I can fly*. Catch a theme here, do it, try it, get up and go. Now, recently I heard something and put it on my phone as an answering message. (I know no one has an answering machine.) *Stooped Shoulders Make You Look Older*. This one reminds me to stand up straight. I remember it when I walk and see my shadow, and while sitting in a chair. I catch my reflection while exercising and find me straightening my back and shoulders. Life is filled with Golden Lines, they might even be something your mother said frequently, like: *Make your bed*. Gotta go, my bed needs to be made.

Laura Bridges

These are my golden lines:
A lady named Ms. Pearl has been close to my brothers and I since we were tiny. We stayed with her during the day after birth until we were old enough to go to school. She taught me a poem when I was five and I remember it to this day.

*Though my heart may set in darkness,
It will rise in perfect light,
For I have loved the stars too dearly,
To be fearful of the night.*

Suzanne Rhodes

*While the long grain is softening
in the water, gurgling
over a low stove flame, before
the salted Winter Vegetable is sliced
for breakfast, before the birds,
my mother glides an ivory comb*

through her hair, heavy
and black as calligrapher's ink.
From Li-Young Lee's "Early in Morning"

Thanks to these members for trying out the form, haibun.

Preserve by **Suzanne Underwood Rhodes**

Tall prairie grasses, rusting in late September sun,
hide life hedged in by houses on the edge and a few
acres of Sam's Club. Few humans see the deer,
raccoons, bobwhites and rabbits that find refuge here.
Few eyes follow the Monarchs favoring the
bluestems or flickers climbing the oaks. Keep it
secret if you come. Be like the turtle.

Let freezing rain come
and scorching skies of summer,
not harm from our hand.

Senior Moment by **Terrie Jacks**

The other day while driving, I noticed on the dash's
screen a message, *Listening*. Listening. Who is
listening? No one was in the car, but me and I wasn't
listening to anything. But someone was listening.
Was Big Brother listening? Concerned, I stopped to
investigate. It now said, *Thanks for listening* to some
radio station. I turned the radio off.

silence
the ringing in my ears
fills the room

Tokyo by **Gail Denham**
...halibun/tanka

Trampled paths circle pagoda shrines where faithful
pay homage. We roam the huge city, view restaurant
windows with plasticized food to lure the hungry.
Cautious, we navigate crowded sidewalks. Flocks of
uniformed school girls giggle their way home.
Business men – brisk, polite, full of purpose, fill
crosswalks at lights. Multi-colored umbrellas lie open
at store entrances. Commuter trains fly by; riders
jammed tight against windows. Cyclists scoot
between buses and cars. Finally we find a peaceful
spot. Under a tree, grass is soft and cool. We gaze
across the lake at the Imperial Palace in its afternoon
shining.

We escape busy Tokyo streets, reflect on ancient
culture – watch the ducks, consider a long rest in the
peace of this place.

call of swimming ducks
brings solace, calm reflections
lake balm in city
people sit, tender on grass,
eased in their spirits

Interview with Stacy Pendergrast

Stacy Pendergrast is an education and instruction
specialist for the Arkansas Education Television
Network (AETN), a PBS affiliate, a teaching artist
for the Arkansas Arts Council, and she serves as the
press secretary for Jo McDougall, the Poet Laureate
of Arkansas.



I recently caught up with
Stacy while she was
traveling in an RV with her
husband. Since he was
driving, she was able to
answer my questions. **How
is poetry doing in the state
of Arkansas?** Stacy says
the literary community

where she lives in central Arkansas is booming
because there is so much opportunity to connect.
There are readings, book talks, writers' groups, and
conferences. Some of these are happening virtually
now, but they are still happening. **How are you
keeping it alive?** In August 2019, Arkansas PBS
held a Poetry Camp for youth. Ten "slambassadors"
stood up and spoke into the open mic. Jo McDougall,
Arkansas Poet Laureate, spoke to them. The event
inspired McDougall to lobby the governor for a
Youth Poetry Day for Arkansas. Next summer, Pine
Bluff will hold a summer outreach program
sponsored by Arkansas PBS. Stacy wrote a mid-
America Arts Alliance grant and as a member of the
Haiku Society of America, Arkansas chapter, she will
man their Zoom conference being held the second
weekend in November. When **describing herself as
a poet**, she says she's a haiku poet, a narrative poet, a
memoir writer, and a haibun poet. "Modern
American haiku focuses on a concrete moment which
is a great building block for all kinds of writing,"
states Stacy. She thinks haiku helps her appreciate
small moments of life. Poetry is a series of moments,
scenes, sensory images, dialogue—like "flipping
through an album of sensory images." Stacy says she
learned to write haiku from Alexis Rotella from New
Jersey. She considers Mary Karr to be the best living
memoirist of our time. Other writers she admires are
Sonia Livingston who wrote *Ghost Bread* which

features small vignettes, haiku-like moments, and Jo McDougall, Arkansas Poet Laureate, who writes haiku-like poems. Local poet Carolyn Earlywine, author of *Lesbian Fashion Struggles*, and particularly the poem, “GSA” caught her attention because Earlywine is a teacher who runs a club for gay youth and when Stacy was teaching, she also ran poetry clubs. When asked about her **process as a writer**, she replied, “I stew.” Her process takes a long time; she writes and writes and rewrites. She starts with phrases or words. When she reads, she writes in the margins and when she is done with the book, she takes all of the phrases and puts them together on the page. She also keeps journals full of fragments of thoughts. She pulls from both of these sources when beginning a piece. She likes to string her diary of haiku together to form the narrative part of a haibun. Stacy does something toward writing every day which also includes reading. She offers this **revision tip** that she learned from Brian Borland at Sibling Rivalry Press: Read it backwards—last line first and so on. When you do that, “the word order becomes less predictable,” she says. When I asked her **what question she wishes people would ask her**, she said, “If you could be a living poem which would you be?” Her advice to all of us is this: “Poetry can help us get through these times. Write our way through it.”

For more about Stacy, click on these links:
<https://www.stacypendergrast.com/>
http://www.spankthecarp.com/profile_pendergrast.html

Sunrise through the trees



Photo by Karen Moulton

Next Issue Theme:

Poets Who Changed Your Writing

For our next issue of News ‘N’ Notes, please email or mail the name or names of a poet or poets who influenced your writing. Include a few sentences on how each poet affected you. I will send a reminder when we get closer to the deadline.

From the Editor

Strange times continue in our world, but poetry is keeping pace. Virtual conferences and workshops abound. Have you found one that meets your needs? I’ve participated in a few and am in a series about revision now. I’m gaining a new respect for poetry prompts, too.

Looking for some contests? Check out the state contests listed on the National Federation of Poetry Societies, Inc. site: nfps.com

The PRA also has contests:

November Subject: Any; Form: Cameo—7 lines

December Subject: What I’ve Learned; Form: Free Verse—32-line limit

January Subject: Any; Form: Diamante—7 lines

<https://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org/contests/monthlycontests2016/>

Thank you to Terrie Jacks for our next issue’s form to try, the **triolet**. If you know the form and have one you’d like to share with all of us, please send it. If you are like me and haven’t tried the triolet before and are willing to share your efforts, please email them, and I’ll share them in the next News ‘N’ Notes. Here is an example of the form by Terrie:

Squirrel Chase

Five squirrels’ race, they’re swift of feet,
 with leaps that jump from tree to tree.
 while down below a dog thinks *treat*,
 five squirrels’ race, they’re swift of feet.
 The squirrels dash, the dog is beat,
 the zippy five move fast and free.
 Five squirrels’ race, they’re swift of feet,
 With leaps that jump from tree to tree.

Stay safe.
 Keep poetry alive.

Karen Moulton
 Editor